

SALT-LICKS.

THEIR VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE CONSERVATION OF WILDLIFE
IN MALAYA.

BY

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The successful preservation of Wildlife is intimately connected with ecological study.

Salt-licks are embraced by such study. To provide a congenial environment for the successful and normal production of the various species of large Wildlife found in a Malayan Jungle the environment must include some type of soil, or exudations from the soil, which form salt-licks for such animals as elephant, seladang, rhinoceros, tapir, sambhur, and barking deer.

The term salt-lick may be considered as a generic one. It is used to indicate any soil in which some natural substance is found which is attractive to wildlife and which they eat or drink. It is probably taken as a medicine, and undoubtedly acts as an aperient.

In Northern Pahang, there have been many places where from time immemorial wild animals and even birds have been accustomed to utilize certain exudations from the soil. The extent to which some of these places have been used, is clearly indicated by the trails leading thereto, they show how important they have been to the life and well being of generations of jungle inhabitants.

The most popular licks are those which have been centered round sulphur springs. Some licks are mud-licks. They do not appear to contain sulphur, but are impregnated with some saline which for want of analysis I am unable to identify.

In Pahang the important salt-licks near the main range are all sulphur springs. In one place, well in the foot-hills of the mountains, there is a hot sulphur spring, much too hot for the animals to drink from, so they have made a lick somewhat below the spring where the sulphur water has cooled down.

Many of these licks in Northern Pahang—I will describe some of them—are still being used, but in most cases, owing to circumstances that I will indicate, they have fallen from the position that they occupied a few decades ago.

The first and most important reason why they have become less used is because of the alarming decrease in the incidence of the larger wildlife. In addition to a cumulative decrease going back for some years, there has been, during the last five years or so, much disturbance throughout nearly all the river valleys by gold stealers and jelutong tappers—in many cases the same people—that a congenial environment has been denied to the larger wildlife and normal breeding has not taken place. The extraordinary decrease in the numbers of sambhur deer which cannot be accounted

for by hunting, legitimate and illegitimate, can only be due to the failure to breed in the usual sequences because of continual disturbance.

All this has affected the salt-licks; still, if our larger wild animals are to be saved from extinction—wildlife is supposed to be preserved now—it must be part of the ecological studies of those whose duty it is to enforce the preservation laws, to devote time to the question of the salt-licks and to appreciate their great importance in the life cycle of our larger fauna.

It is my earnest hope that by describing some of these licks I may stimulate those whose responsibility it is to save our decreasing wildlife to devote more time to these most important phenomena. Such study will help them to realize their real importance to the cause of preservation and the contentment of the wild creatures of the jungle.

THE TELOM VALLEY

Probably at the present time the most important salt-lick in Ulu Pahang is Jenut Lanau in the Sungei Telom Valley. This lick **Jenut Lanau** consists chiefly of a sulphur spring amongst some rocks at the bottom of a pool, some two feet deep. This spring never runs dry and is a permanent attraction to elephant and sambhur deer. Seladang some years ago used this lick regularly, coming over generally from the direction of the Jelai Ketchil Valley. Now only one old bull ever visits the lick, and even then only for a day or two during the year.

But elephants and sambhur deer use it continuously, especially elephants. I have identified eight tuskers in that lick, but possibly I may have counted one twice over. But I have certainly not seen every male elephant that visits the lick. Female elephants look so much alike that I should not like to say how many I think I have seen.

This lick is an ideal one to visit for the purpose of photographing wild elephants and sambhur. But when elephants are about, sambhur do not like the lick, and generally keep away. Elephants make such a mess of the pool, and sambhur being unable to get their mouths right down to the springs—they do their best at times, putting their muzzles into the water right up to their eyes—object to a mixture of diluted sulphur water and elephants' excrement.

I have seen as many as five sambhur in the lick together, an unusual sight in this country. I have never seen a big stag in Jenut Lanau. This is due to the considerable amount of poaching that has gone on in this lick up to a few years ago.

The landing place for Jenut Lanau can be reached from the railway station at Bukit Betong by motor-boat in a day unless the Jelai River is in flood.

Another important lick in the Telom Valley is Jenut Misong, a day's journey up river from Jenut Lanau. The last six or seven **Jenut Misong** miles from Kuala Sungei Perahu, the end of navigation, is made

by jungle path. The Jenut is about a mile from the left bank of the Telom River.

Jenut Batu

This lick, some thirty years ago, was a great place for deer shooting from hides; on the ground and up trees. It was so good that now few deer can be found there. But elephants utilize it a great deal, as well as another small lick known as Jenut Batu, about a mile further up the Misong Valley.

The principal attraction at Jenut Misong is sulphur impregnated sand on the left side of the river, which the elephants dig up to get at a more concentrated solution of sulphur deeper down.

Seladang used to occasionally visit this lick, but those days have passed. It is doubtful if any seladang herd can now be found in the Upper Telom Valley. It must be remembered however that with the continual disturbance that is going on in all these valleys, solitary seladang are liable to travel long distances from their regular beats and the discovery of a seladang in Jenut Misong must not be taken as indicating the return of a herd to its old haunts.

THE SERAU VALLEY.

The Serau River together with the Telom and Jelai Ketchil are the confluents of the Jelai River.

In the Valley of the Serau there are, what were a few decades ago, several important salt-licks. They are now mere derelicts of their former pristine value; not because the localities where they are situated have been developed, they are still in their virgin jungle; but because the chief frequenter of these licks, the Sumatran rhinoceros, has been poached almost out of existence. I will give a brief description of each lick.

**Jenut Batu
Dada**

In the Serau itself there is one lick, Jenut Batu Dada, which is still very occasionally visited by an old male rhinoceros. This is veritably 'the last of his race' so far as that lick is concerned. From the indications in the vicinity of the lick, this place must have been used by dozens of rhinoceroses before they were destroyed by poachers and their infernal pits. Deep unused trails, abandoned wallows, banks cut into by innumerable rhinoceroses' horns and feet, all testify to the glories of this recreation ground of animals long since passed away.

There is a large pool in the centre of the clearing which constitutes the surroundings of this lick. This pool contains several sulphur springs. It is almost completely surrounded by well-polished rocks, polished by the action of generations of wild animals. I have seen rhinoceros, sambhur, kijang, and wild dogs in this lick, as well as a Malay serpent eagle, which seemed to enjoy the sulphur water with the best of them. Elephants very occasionally visit the lick. Tapir also use the lick but not seladang.

Jenut Lyong

The Sungei Besay, a large tributary on the right bank of the Serau, had three good salt-licks at one time. Jenut Lyong, not very far from Kuala Besay, is still visited by elephants.

Jenut Patchat, is a small lick on the left bank of the Besay above Jeram Limau. This lick used to be visited by rhinoceros; but they go there no longer for the excellent reason that there is none to go.

**Jenut
Patchat**

The most important lick in the Besay was Jenut Bliong; far up in the foot hills of Gunong Bedong. There were two very active sulphur springs in that lick.

**Jenut
Bliong**

From the indications still in evidence, this lick must have been used by rhinoceroses in some numbers but is seldom if ever visited by them now. I advisedly write 'seldom' because there is no reason why the old rhinoceros who visits the Jenut Batu Dada should not visit Jenut Bliong—they are not more than twenty miles apart in a straight line—although I have no evidence to support such an idea.

Elephants still use this lick. The Besay rises in Gunong Bedong and extensive pitting for rhinoceros was done in the foot hills some years ago. I have seen pits well up the mountain. No doubt the breeding stock was so depleted that rhinoceroses were not left in sufficient numbers to maintain a normal breeding rate. That means extinction.

Above Kuala Besay there is on the left bank of the Serau a large tributary known as the Briang. About three miles from Kuala Briang, situated on both sides of the river Briang, there is a large salt-lick, the Jenut Briang.

Jenut Briang

On one side of the river there is sulphur impregnated sand, and on the right bank a rampart of limestone outcrop in which there are sulphur springs.

Around this lick I found no less than 18 old rhinoceros pits, which alone show that many rhinos must have used this lick. This lick has not been visited by rhinoceroses for very many years, but the lick is used by elephants and sambhur, and very occasionally, seladang. It is an extensive lick with many old game trails, deeply worn, leading into it. The rocks on the right bank of the river have been polished almost to perfection by the action of elephants and rhinoceroses using this lick in years long gone by.

Above the confluence of the Chadu and the Serambun, which form the Serau, there are two sulphur licks. One known as Jenut Batu Karam, on the left bank of the Chadu, has been entirely ruined by mining, mostly unlawful.

**Jenut Batu
Karam**

The second, known as Jenut Batu Papan, is far away up the Serambun within a couple of miles of the Kelantan Border. This lick was once a very favourite haunt of rhinoceros, but here again poachers did their deadly pitting in the early part of this century and the Serambun Valley now holds few rhinoceros.

**Jenut Batu
Papan**

I found no less than 14 old rhino pits round this lick, but no doubt neither here nor round Jenut Briang did I find anything like all the pits that had been made. Within the last ten years poachers have come over to this lick from Kelantan. I have myself seen the

remains of a platform built in Jenut Batu Papan, which the local Sakai informed me had been built by Chinese poachers from Pulau.

Jenut Batu Papan consists of a sulphur spring amongst some rocks, alongside the small stream that runs through the lick. But what was undoubtedly an attraction as well was a 'battery' of mud wallows close to the lick situated under the toe of a steep hill side. There were eight of these wallows quite close together. Two of them are still used, but only very occasionally. It is possible that there is a small modicum of sulphur in these wallows which made them so attractive to rhinoceroses.

An old male rhinoceros sometimes uses the wallows but does not patronize the lick very often. Tapir are fond of this lick and I have seen the tracks of serow (*kambing grun*) in the sand near the sulphur spring. I have seen rhinoceros, tapir, and also a serpent eagle in this lick.

The entire jungle for miles and miles in Pahang and Kelantan is unoccupied by any human inhabitants and the environment of the Serambun Valley is exceptionally suitable for rhinoceroses. But for years, when intensive poaching was going on, there must have been no normal breeding and the seriously depleted stock now shows the results.

Still, in the Serambun Valley, an area of about 30,000 acres, there is a very small stock of rhinoceros which might be saved with careful conservation. I have identified, a few years ago, five head which included one calf. I applied for this entirely unopened and unoccupied area as a rhinoceros reserve, but someone whispered the magic word gold, and when there is any mention of possible gold exploitation no other subject is considered for a moment!

The Serau and its tributaries are the only hope for the rhino in Ulu Pahang, with the one exception of that portion of the upper waters of the Tanum River, which lie within the King George V National Park area. But the environment there is not so suitable as that in the Serau. In the Telom and Jelai Ketchil Valleys there are no rhinoceros at all.

THE JELAI KETCHIL RIVER.

Jenut Stein In the Jelai Ketchil River the Jenut Stein is a well known and important salt-lick. It is much favoured by sambhur deer and until a few years ago by seladang. The seladang in the Jelai Ketchil have been so much disturbed by jelutong tappers that they have broken up into small groups and undoubtedly have not been breeding normally. It must be recognized that seladang are often attacked by tiger if they are found in small groups accompanied by a calf, and undoubtedly disturbance, which helps to break up the herds, is of assistance to the tiger who is able to take a greater toll of calves than he can under conditions more favourable for the seladang.

A few years ago a hut was built by two Chinese between Jenut Stein and Jenut Kahamang, a small lick about a mile away up **Jenut** stream from Jenut Stein. The hut was built right alongside the **Kahamang** main game trail.

These Chinese were supposed to be jelutong tappers which trade they no doubt exercised spasmodically, but they also ran an illicit still and sponged on the Sakai. To serve their illegal ends they distributed some of the liquor to the Sakai.

The lick was entirely deserted by seladang for over two years because of the continual use of their trails, the smell of human occupation which tainted the approaches to the lick, and the disturbance caused by trails which these Chinese made round the lick.

Jenut Stein consists of sulphur impregnated sand over an area of several hundred square feet, with a small stream meandering through it. Elephants were very fond of the lick until the locality was tainted by the activities of these Chinese, but during the period of the Chinese occupation they also deserted the lick. This is a good argument for proper protection of these licks. The elephants are back again now and occasionally visit the locality. They dig deep holes in the sand to try to find the best places.

Jenut Tebarau, a small lick near the end of navigation up the Jelai Ketchil River, is badly situated between two steep hill sides. **Jenut** It is rich in sulphur springs and at times is much used by seladang. **Tebarau**

Beyond Jenut Tebarau, far above the series of cascades that constitute the upper waters of the Jelai Ketchil, there are two hot **Jenut Gatak** sulphur springs which are used as Jenut. One known as Jenut Gatak—I have mentioned this lick on page 2—is used by elephants and very occasionally seladang.

The other spring, known as Jenut Mesai, is near Jenut Gatak but is seldom used by wildlife. **Jenut Mesai**

THE TELANG VALLEY.

There is one important salt-lick in the Ulu Telang area known as Jenut Blimbing, situated in the Ulu of the Sungei Sergi, a **Jenut Blim-** small tributary of the Sungei Tengalan which joins the parent river **bing** near Kuala Tengalan.

This lick is a mud-lick, there being no apparent indication of sulphur. It has been much used by elephant and seladang, the deeply worn trails going down the river banks to the lick being sufficient testimony to the popularity of the lick.

But owing to a large influx of gold-stealing Chinese, and jelutong tappers, disturbance has done its deadly work to the larger fauna which frequented the valleys of the Telang and the Tengalan. This lick is no longer used as it was a few years ago.

In this area, that is to say between the Jelai River above Kuala Lipis, the Kuala Lipis—Raub Road, and the track from Raub to Kuala Medang, there is one old rhino which sometimes goes to

Jenut Blimbing. I believe that it is the sole survivor of the rhino in that area. I do not know its sex, but that is immaterial because rhinoceroses have not yet reached the Martian stage where they can propagate their species by budding-off. Rhino there, are doomed, because there is no hope of others coming into that terrain.

CONCLUSION.

That completes the list of important salt-licks in Ulu Pahang, but does not include those in the King George V National Park. I wish to state what I think should be done to save these licks from destruction.

Perhaps I should have given, earlier in this article, an explanation of the word 'Jenut'.

'Jenut' is the commonest word used by Malays in Pahang for salt-lick. A less common word is 'Taram'. The word 'Sesap' or 'Sesapan' is the word generally used in Negri Sembilan but is very occasionally used in Pahang.

None of the licks mentioned are in territory that has been opened up or developed; but Jenut Lanau, Jenut Stein and Jenut Tebarau are in country where there are Sakai.

The chief safe-guard for the preservation of these salt-licks must be by legal provision in the laws for the preservation of wildlife.

There is a ruling, agreed to by the Residents many years ago, that no land within two miles of a recognized salt-lick shall be given out until the Game Warden has been consulted on the matter. This ruling has not been invariably respected, and the present position is unsatisfactory.

In the Tersang Valley, in the Raub District, a buffalo farm was established almost on the top of Jenut Tersang, a valuable salt-lick used by seladang and elephants, and the only large lick in the neighbourhood. There was only one Jenut Tersang but dozens of places where a buffalo farm could have been established.

Some years ago a prospecting licence was given out without in any way consulting the Game Warden over an area embracing Jenut Misong and Jenut Batu.

Quite recently a prospecting licence was very nearly given out to cover an area embracing Jenut Lanau, the most important lick in the tributaries of the Jelai River.

These mistakes have been made due to slipshod record work in Land Offices, and can only be avoided or prevented by legislation.

An amendment to the law should be made to reserve from alienation, for any purpose whatsoever, except that of wildlife conservation, any land within a radius of two miles from all the active and valuable salt-licks, a list of which should be drawn up as a schedule to Wild Animals and Birds Protection Enactment. (Cap.: 193.).

Reservation of such areas should prohibit any action within such areas so reserved, which would cause disturbance to those

areas, and no permission should be given to any person to take any jungle produce or to undertake any prospecting of any kind within such areas.

Some of the licks I have mentioned are marked on the topographical map sheets, and the identification of their exact positions should be simple. Those not marked should be marked.

The following salt-licks in Ulu Pahang should be scheduled as coming within the scope of special legislation.

Jenut Lanau.	}	Telom Valley.
Jenut Misong.		
Jenut Bliong.	}	Serau Valley.
Jenut Batu Dada.		
Jenut Batu Papan.		
Jenut Briang.		
Jenut Stein.	}	Jelai Ketchil Valley.
Jenut Gatak.		
Jenut Blimbing.	...	Telang Valley.

In other parts of Pahang there are salt-licks important to the welfare of the wildlife, and similar steps should be taken to guard them also.

It must be a part of any vigorous policy of Wildlife Conservation to preserve salt-licks, and if they are recognized, as they should be recognized, as important adjuncts to a congenial environment for many species, then laws to preserve them, and machinery to enforce those laws, become imperative.